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YUGOSLAVIA: Ethnic Albanian Protests Intensify in Kosovo

Yugoslavia's collective presidency yesterday suggested it may use security forces to break up growing ethnic Albanian protests in Kosovo Province and reaffirmed party support of Serbian demands for more control over the mostly Albanian region. According to the Yugoslav press, as many as 7,000 university students held a peaceful indoor demonstration in Kosovo yesterday in support of miners and other industrial workers who have been on strike since Monday. The protesters oppose proposed constitutional amendments that would give the Serbian Republic more power over Kosovo and demand that new Kosovo party leader Morina and Serbian party leader Milosevic resign. Press reports also indicate that many Albanians have closed their shops, and Serbian media claim posters calling Albanians to arms have appeared. Senior federal officials reportedly are in Kosovo.

Federal and provincial officials will probably try to ride out the protests for the next few days if, as is likely, they remain peaceful. Political tensions in Kosovo are likely to increase in the coming weeks, however, as the provincial legislature prepares to vote on the amendments. The authorities will use security forces against protesters if they break the ban on street demonstrations imposed last November or if serious violence occurs. Regardless of the fate of the amendments, the continuing instability will distract federal leaders from other pressing issues.